

Oiii12 Of Brittish Beasts the Buck is King

Notes. Although undated, this verse seems to belong to the months prior to Buckingham's assassination, during which fantasies of the Duke's violent demise began to take definite shape. The poem depends on a hunting metaphor and a pun on Buckingham's name—rendering it as Buck-King-of-Game—that allow the poet to imagine the Duke's bloody death. Holstun (160) has a brief but astute reading of the poem that stresses the degree to which the King is implicated in the attack on Buckingham, and notes the possibly regicidal urges barely concealed in the poem's final four lines. See also McRae, *Literature* 126-27.

“Upon the D. of B.”

Of Brittish Beasts the Buck¹ is King
His Game and fame through Europe ringe,
His horne exalted,² keepes in awe
The lesser flocks; his Will's a Lawe.
Our Charlemaine³ takes much delight
In this great beast soe faire in sight,
With his whole heart affects the same,
And loves too well Buck-King of Game.⁴
When hee is chac'd, then 'gins the sport,
When nigh his End, who's sorry for't?
And when he falls the Hunter's gladd,
The hounds are flesh'd, and few are sadd:
The Forresters say, Hee alive
The tender thicketts nere can thrive,
Hee doth soe barke and pill⁵ the trees,
Thus wee for Game our profitt leese.
The huntsmen⁶ have pursu'd this Deare,
And follow'd him with full careere,
But such his craft, and such their lott,
They hunt him oft, but take him not.

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A Buck's a beast; a King is but a Man,
A Game's a pleasure shorter then a span:
A beast shall perish; but a Man shall dye,
All pleasures fade. This bee thy destinie.

Source. BL MS Sloane 826, fols. 184v-185r

Other known sources. Bodleian MS Malone 23, p. 103

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¹ *Buck*: the male deer.

² *His horne exalted*: a sign of victory or triumph—the phrase is biblical in origin (see, e.g., 1 Samuel 2.10).

³ *Charlemaine*: Charlemagne or Charles the Great; here meaning Charles I.

⁴ *Buck-King of Game*: i.e. Buckingham.

⁵ *barke and pill*: strip, plunder, pillage.

⁶ *The huntsmen*: probably alluding to the MPs who tried and failed to bring Buckingham down in 1626 and 1628.
